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Why start a Block Group?

Block Clubs create a greater sense of community among neighbors, first through the common goal of improving the neighborhood and second by bringing them together during Block Club meeting and events. Neighbors have the power to make a difference. It's about community; looking out for each other; and keeping an eye on the neighborhood.

In Lakewood, we know that just as important as being safe, is *feeling* safe. Block Clubs instill a greater sense of security and reduce fear of crime in your community. Residents who live in an area know the needs of the area better than anyone. By communicating with each other and working together as a team, your community can make a difference.

Reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime: Participants are taught to take preventative measures to decrease the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Law enforcement agencies report that Block Clubs reduce the risks of home burglaries, vandalism, personal assault, and fraud.

Become better prepared to respond to suspicious activity: Communication between the neighborhood and the police department is crucial. Part of a Block Club is learning how to identify and report suspicious activity. You will also learn to provide the police with the information that they need to resolve the issue. Criminals know that if a neighborhood has a Crime Watch sign posted, the neighborhood is not an easy target. It is a notice that the neighborhood is organized and does not tolerate criminal activity.

Knowing your neighbors, creating a sense of community: Block Clubs promote getting to know your neighbors and participation in Block Club events and activities. Getting to know the people who live closest to you helps create a sense of community between you and your neighbors.

Address other areas of concern: Block Club participants can address other issues that concern their neighborhood. Areas of interest might include: recreational opportunities for children, neighborhood clean ups, school safety programs, noise issues, abandoned vehicles, or suspicious activity occurrences. Onelakewood.com also has an easy-to-use, [interactive "Report A Problem" feature](#).



Getting Started at the Neighborhood Level

The best way to organize a Block Club is to build upon the existing active residents and relationships. A Block Club is a more formal invitation to 'get involved' and creates a community among neighbors. This sense of community can be created by hosting Block Club events that include activities that everyone in the neighborhood can help plan, participate in, and enjoy. If no Block or Neighborhood Watch exists a Block Club can still be formed, but the crime prevention and crime awareness aspect of a watch program and the involvement of law enforcement should be included.

Organizing the First Meeting: You can organize an informal social event at your home or local church, to get the process started. A local community organizer or Community Liaison Officer can be contacted to attend the meeting and discuss the benefits of a Block Club, information on crime occurring in your area, and useful tips to reduce crime. Consider hosting a "fun night," as a way to get to know your neighbors better first.

Effective ways to get people to the first meeting: Reaching out to all of the neighbors is important. Distribute the flyers noting the location, time, and purpose of the meeting seven to ten days before the meeting to the neighborhood. You might also want to include the topic you will be discussing.

Door-to-Door contacts: When distributing flyers to the neighbors, try to speak to the neighbor as well. Personal contact helps to develop a sense of community and friendly relations. Although it takes more time, personal contacts allow you to learn about your neighbor's interests and ask them about concerns they would like to see discussed at the meeting.

Get commitments: When inviting neighbors, try to get them to commit to attending your Block Club meeting. They may be more likely to attend so as not to disappoint you. Don't forget to invite your [Lakewood Ward Police Officer](#).

Arrange for refreshments: Food is always a good draw. Even lemonade and cookies can go a long way towards enticing your neighbors to the meeting.

Reminder phone calls: If you have the time, give a reminder phone call to your neighbors and other invited guests the day before the meeting.

What the block meeting should include

Welcome and Sign In: Welcome everyone and let them know how long the meeting will last. Use a sign-in sheet to keep track of who is present at the meeting. Read aloud the agenda and items to be covered and tell residents there will be time after the meeting to ask questions. Start the meeting on time and end on time by providing an opportunity for introductions at the start of the meeting and informal discussion periods after the meeting.

Introductions: Let residents introduce themselves by giving their names and addresses.

Discussion of Neighborhood Issues: Allow residents time to raise specific neighborhood concerns. At the first few meetings, residents might express anger and frustration over neighborhood problems and criticize law enforcement for not doing more to address their problems. As time goes on though, residents will use this time to focus on specific issues and ways to address them.

Crime Prevention Presentation: During the first meeting, the Community Liaison Officer or their representative will provide information on crime prevention topics and ways to maintain an active Block Club.

Selection of a Block Club Captain or Co-Captains: The basic structure of a Block Club involves a captain or co-captains and members. A captain can be elected by the members during the first meeting or can just be unofficially decided until a later meeting. It is recommended that the captain and co-captain are assigned for a specific period of time, such as one year, which enables transition and sharing of responsibility.

Issues for the Next Meeting: Before the meeting adjourns, plan on the issues to be discussed at the next meeting.

Date, Time and Place for Next Meeting: Members usually meet once a month or, at the *very least*, every other month. Captains and other members involved with planning, training and meeting activities usually meet more often.

Conclusion/Refreshments and Sharing: The time after the meeting can be as important as the meeting itself. During this time, members can have the opportunity to visit and build friendships and informally brainstorm on future goals and strategies.

Tips and best practices for staying in touch:

- Social media, including Facebook (groups or pages) and Twitter.
- Flyers and handouts — a half-sheet should suffice.
- Contact list collected during the door-to-door process includes phone number and email address. The email approach is possibly the best way to keep neighbors in the loop.
- A mass-mailing tool, such as Mail Chimp may make the process easier.
- Some ambitious Block Clubs — such as St. Charles Avenue — have their own websites.